3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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Fire

372 As regards the use of fire, they have no special technique of their own. Some buy match-boxes, others borrow them from neighbours, nor is fire kept burning all day. It is only when the men go to the jungles on hunting excursions that they light a fire by the friction of wood. Their ovens did not strike us with any originality, being mud-plastered earthen affairs rising almost a cubit from the plinth, so arranged that the pots may rest on three triangular supports, the only novelty we marked being at Tikaripara, where we were shown one made of red mud, as an item of kitchen sculpture. (See illustration).

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Santal Oven

Food

252 Boiled rice is the staple food of the Santal like
262 the rest of the neighbouring population, but there is something in the preparation that keeps the vitamins intact. It cannot be otherwise, for, the rice is "dheñki"-husked by themselves ; they do not give it a preliminary washing before pouring it into the cooking pan and allow all the water to be saturated by the grains in the process of cooking. As
262 regards the side-dishes, their neighbours and visitors indulge in their sense of humour when they refer to

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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258 through the vertical post at the other end. Then they press together the two logs by placing another solid piece of wood crosswise over the upper log parallel to the wooden cleat which is fitted in the vertical post. With the help of these two, the logs are pressed together. Now-a-days the Santals supply the seeds and fruits to the Teli (oil men) and get oil in return. Besides using this oil for curry preparation they use oil in anointing, lubricating, for medicinal purposes and for lighting lamps.

[178] [252] [302] [757] [372]

How the Santals Prepare Pachawe (rice beer) :- The Santals drink Handi in large quantities. Young boys and girls, old men and women all drink Handi. Their method of preparing (rice beer) handi is as follows :- The first thing is to make a pot, with a large mouth called *tukuc*. The *tukuc* is filled with dry leaves or straw and set on the fire, they do it outside the house in the open as there is much smoke. This is done in the morning when they are to start brewing. When the *tukuc* becomes cool, it is cleaned. Then in the afternoon, they take ordinary rice and roast this a little. The roasting is said to give a certain flavour to the beer. Thereupon the rice is boiled and after that spread out to dry. The quantity of rice used for one brew varies from four to six paos (one pao is quarter of a seer). When the rice is fairly dry it is mixed with some vegetable fermenting stuff called Bakhar.[1] Very often certain vegetable matter is added to the Bakhar to make the beer intoxicating. When the rice and

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1. Bakhar is a small round white thing which the Santals buy in the market. It is prepared by mixing hundred kinds of roots of trees and creepers with the powder of rice.

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so, they are able to determine the sex of subsequent children according to the place at which the cord is cut. 844

Special measures have to be taken when delivery proves to be difficult. An *ojha* is called in if he lives at hand. He may resort to consulting the omens with leaf and oil, but if matters do not appear to be so serious he proceeds at once to prescribe treatment. One of his methods is to take a square of bark from a plantain tree in his right hand and to prick it repeatedly with a needle held in his left hand. Or a dagger is held upright over a brass drinking vessel and water is poured down the blade of the dagger, this water afterwards being given to the mother to drink. Another method is to tie a root to the mother's hair. It is important that the strand of hair to which the root is tied should be cut off as soon as the birth has taken place, lest she should lose her entrails as well. No men are admitted to the room where the birth is taking place, and the husband has to remain at hand in the courtyard. When the delivery is difficult he comes in for some chaffing or abuse according to the degree of difficulty. Some action of his at the time when conception occurred is held to be responsible. One of his duties is to keep by him the materials for lighting a fire in the room after the child is born. No fire is kept lit during the process of birth, but the fire lit immediately afterwards is used for providing a dry-heat massage for his wife's abdomen and for massage of the infant. As soon as the child is born, the women cry out the news to the husband and any others in the courtyard, and the former takes a large stick with which he repeatedly beats the roof, crying out loudly at the same time to drive away any lurking ghosts. As soon as the floor has been cleaned and the mother is resting, the husband is admitted into the room. He then digs a hole in the floor with a ploughshare and in it he buries the afterbirth. It must not be buried directly beneath a rafter. The Santal does not talk of his "birthplace"; he refers to it as "the village where my afterbirth was buried". 845 [593] [372] • 844

One of the ceremonies that take place on the day that the child is born appears to relate chiefly to the wellbeing of the mother. She and the midwife sit facing each other on the floor of the house. The mother fills a leaf cup with distilled liquor and passes the cup to the midwife, who throws away its contents on her left side; this is repeated three times. The ceremony is known as *met' halan*, or "lifting the eye", and no Santal has been able to offer me an explanation of the custom. It may be ascribed to the necessity for taking precautions against the evil eye. 844 788